

BAILEY K. ASHFORD

(1873 – 1934)

He was born in Washington, DC, one of five children in the family of a prominent physician. His general education was obtained at the public schools and at Columbia University (now George Washington University). In 1896, he graduated from the Georgetown University Medical School and, during this period served as resident physician in several area hospitals.

As a recently commissioned lieutenant in the U.S. Army Medical Corps, he accompanied the military expedition to Puerto Rico in 1898. Serving as the medical officer in the general military hospital in Ponce, Puerto Rico, he was the first to describe and successfully treat North American hookworm in 1899. He was a tireless clinician and conducted an exhaustive study of the anemia caused by hookworm infestation, which was responsible for as many as 12,000 deaths a year. From 1903–1904, he organized and conducted a parasite treatment campaign, which cured approximately 300,000 persons (one-third of the Puerto Rico population) and reduced the death rate from this anemia by 90 percent.

Captain Ashford was a founding member of the Puerto Rico Anemia Commission and, by special authority of the Secretary of War, served on the Commission from 1904–1906. In 1911, his proposal for an Institute of Tropical Medicine in Puerto Rico was approved by the legislature. After serving as a commander of the Army Medical Department's First Division during the First World War, Colonel Ashford was assigned to San Juan and campaigned for the development of "a real school of tropical medicine in the American tropics". The School of Tropical Medicine in San Juan was formally dedicated in 1925. After a 30-year Army career, Dr. Ashford assumed a full time faculty position at the School and continued his interest in tropical medicine.

His writings include: ***Anemia in Puerto Rico, 1904; and uncinariasis in Puerto Rico, 1911***